

Teacher Beliefs in Introducing Cooperative Learning approaches in Classroom Practice at a High School in Japan

Satomi Yoshimuta
English for Liberal Arts
International Christian University

Cooperative Learning (CL) is possibly one of the central approaches that utilize pair or group activities to bring pragmatic situations to language classrooms. However, it is not systematically taught in teacher training courses. Many working teachers have to learn through a trial and error process in their daily classroom practice. This case study is a qualitative research account of the changes in the beliefs of a high school teacher who implemented CL three years before, comparing his beliefs and practices, and analyzing how they changed. Seven video-recorded lessons were observed and four interviews were conducted. It was discovered from the interviews that the key to change was his active participation in teachers' peer groups. The result was that he unintentionally and unconsciously changed not only his role, but he also further elicited students' active engagement, converted his classroom into a space of festivity, and also provided students with an increased sense of self-actualization.

In this paper, I will examine the relationship between the teacher's practice and belief in teaching in *Cooperative Learning* (hereinafter, called CL) approaches. A qualitative analysis of classroom observations and interviews with an experienced teacher of English at a high school in Japan gave shape to the major characteristics of the teachers' pedagogies in teaching English with CL approaches and the beliefs on teacher development supporting his teaching. More specifically, the purpose of the present research is to compare and contrast the beliefs of the Japanese high school teacher of English before and after implementing a CL approach. It also includes examining the complexities that the teacher meets and analyzing the changes in his mindset about teaching and beliefs as a language teacher as he developed CL approaches in his pedagogy. His practices were characterized by three levels of teacher or learner-centeredness and he utilized teaching approaches with different levels of involvement depending on the lesson content, supported by his enthusiastic involvement in teachers' seminars and external peer groups. From the teacher beliefs, it was confirmed that he developed a new understanding and roles compared to those that he previously held, and that his reflection of his teaching in the light of peer teachers' experience and findings made his practice of CL classroom activities effective and successful. The result of this study will be of benefit for language teachers who show concern on CL.

Literature Review

There are numerous studies on teacher cognition and also on CL; however, the field of teacher cognition in practicing CL is yet to be explored. Since the field of teacher beliefs in CL has not been established yet and has been paid attention to only recently, the theoretical

Teacher Beliefs in Cooperative Learning

frameworks for teacher beliefs and CL being applied will now be examined more closely.

First teacher beliefs are broadly and comprehensively defined as “what teachers know, believe, and think” (Borg, 2003, p. 81). In terms of teacher beliefs, Pajares (1992) identifies a list of 16 assumptions made when initiating a study of teachers’ educational beliefs, including the principle that people develop a belief system that stores all the beliefs they acquire through the process of cultural transmission, and another, that the earlier a belief is incorporated into the belief structure, the more difficult it is to alter it (p. 326). Therefore a belief is developed through cultural changes, but making changes in beliefs is laborious once it has already been established.

Borg (2006) divides the concept of beliefs in ‘learning to teach’ in teacher education into two areas. The first one is related with constructivist theories of learning; students bring beliefs to teacher education that influences what and how they learn. The second concept is concerned with belief change as a focus for teacher education. Expectation cultivated by individual beliefs might lead to making decisions on the type of learning, and during that process of teacher education, beliefs might change. In other words, teacher beliefs are ever-changing and influenced by variation of individual expectations and it is possible that teacher beliefs change through teacher development.

Second, CL is defined as an approach to teaching that makes maximum use of cooperative activities involving pairs and small groups of learners in the classroom, which was derived from a response to the integrated public school education in the 60s and 70s in the United States and established in order to provide assistance for marginalized students who may fall behind higher-achievers. It is sometimes recognized as a variation of the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (Richards & Rodgers, p. 192-193). Therefore it is true that there are plenty of overlapping teaching points of situated learning to some extent and they may meet or address the similar demands from real educational settings.

Nevertheless there is a clear distinction between CL and CLT in that many of the scholars in the field of CL including Koyalan (2014) argue that (a) positive interdependence, (b) individual and group accountability, and (c) motivation through group collaboration are essential components in CL and that they must be linked with group reward or goals, which is a significant condition to be fulfilled that distinguishes CL from CLT-based group work/group activity.

Given that CL was originally developed in the West, there may be some cultural complexities in directly implementing CL in Japanese school settings. From the researcher’s understanding, a significant number of Japanese teachers of English call their customized in-class pair or group activities CL even though they do not meet the requirements stated above, and others refrain themselves from calling it CL even though they successfully meet the requirements above, instead they just identify it as ‘group activity’ without the knowledge of CL. Therefore teachers on the spot have different interpretation of what is called cooperative learning. As Jacob has indicated, adaptation to the local context is necessary for successful implementation (1999). To make it successful, teachers scrutinize and select the teaching components based on their experience. In addition, Fushino (2014), says that she has not recognized a single report on how much CL is used in English lessons, but she reported on a study of CLT instead. She also argues that the concepts of CL and group activity can frequently be confused, so she clearly distinguishes group activity from CL, which needs to fulfill certain requirements such as those mentioned above (p. 164).

As Borg (2001) points out, areas most commonly explored in the field of teacher beliefs might include: 1) teaching, 2) learning, 3) learners subject matter such as EFL or language, 4)

Teacher Beliefs in Cooperative Learning

identity (self as a teacher), and 5) the roles. My main research question is related to classroom application of CL and its influence on teacher beliefs as follows; how has the implementation of a CL approach influenced the beliefs and cognition? Exploring the answer to this question is the main purpose of this study, which is supported by a sub-question; how does a Japanese high school teacher of English apply CL to his classroom? Therefore, during observation, I will focus on his teaching (teaching style and interaction with students) and his roles as part of his teacher identity. It will help to clarify how he has established his new teacher beliefs with the introduction of CL. In order to clearly illustrate his teacher beliefs, I will compare three scenes with different levels of student involvement and interaction: teacher-centered lecture, pair work, and group presentation.

Methodology

In this section, I would like to describe the contexts and the participant, explain the method of observation, settings of the site I observed and the focus points in observation related to my previously stated research questions.

Participant

There is one central participant in this study. His name is Mr. Q. He is one of the veteran teachers at a private boys' high school in Japan with twelve years of teaching experience. The research site is his work place, a large-scaled private high school for boys in Greater Tokyo. He has been making changes, adapting some approaches for CL to his lecture-based reading class for these three years. Mr. Q and the researcher belong to a teachers' peer group titled, *Shin Eigo Kyoiku Kenkyukai* [New English Teachers' Association] and have known each other for several years.

Ethics

The consent form, which I gave the participant on the first interview session, affirmed the participant's right to ask any questions at any time and withdraw from this research project at any time. It also clarifies that the research will take all the possible precautions to protect confidentiality and data security.

My position to ethical issues distributed to the participant before the research is as follows:

I will ask and take permission and tell them they can refuse to answer any of my questions before interviewing. The purpose of research will be cleared to the interview group. I won't ask and force them to answer any of my questions that can harm to their personal life. No violent questions and questions those could affect their personal life were not asked. I won't put any irrelevant and false data in my research.

I will protect the data adequately. All the received information will be preserved in my house. I will analyze data by describing and summarizing my paper. In addition, my data will be analyzed by methodologies of qualitative research, by showing and comparing variations and identifying relationship among the traits. Data will be compiled then from their answers.

Confidentiality will be managed strictly in my whole research. No identity and data will be disclosed to the general public. The readers of the paper wouldn't be able to identify the participant and the research site. I will take a written consent regarding

Teacher Beliefs in Cooperative Learning

that the participant have understood the terms and conditions of my research.

Data Collection

The participant is a member of the Kanagawa chapter of the nation-wide English teachers' group titled New English Teachers' Association, where Japanese teachers of English working at public and private schools meet and discuss various issues in our daily practices of teaching English. The association is a gathering of English educators who lead practical and down-to-earth discussions rather than academic pursuit. They regularly contemplate how they can improve teaching practices and establish favorable relationships with students. This is one of the most resourceful spaces in which they can further pursue teacher development. It is advantageous to conduct a research with a participant whom the researcher has a personal tie. Emerson, et. al., suggest that the fieldworker inform people in the setting of the research, especially those with whom the researcher has established some form of personal relationship (1995, p. 21) so that the researchers should be open to avoid the risks and likely sense of betrayal. In this study, there is very little concern on such an issue since the participant was very cooperative and understanding to educational researches.

The observation material is a DVD, including Mr. Q's seven lessons. He asked his co-workers in the school office to shoot his six lessons during June and July, 2014 for the purpose of his own reflection and then stored it on a DVD, which the researcher borrowed for observation. The DVD included six different clips of different lengths on six different days. One of the clips was a full class for longer than 40 minutes and covered an initial lesson for a particular unit of the reading textbook. The shortest clip demonstrated students' poster presentations for six minutes as a finalizing task in the whole unit. The DVD was sent to the researcher by mail for the researcher's reference.

Positionality/reflexivity

The researcher is a female instructor of English and has been a practitioner of CL for four years. In the interview, the interviewer and the interviewee both use Japanese, our mother tongue. Mr. Q is of uncertain age. Seemingly the researcher might be younger than he. They have established a *sempai-kohai*, senior-junior, relationship in the teachers' association. This socially vertical relationship may possibly influence how the researcher interviews, and how the interviewee responds.

Analysis of Data Collection

(a) Advantages of using recorded DVD. DVD can be viewed repeatedly, which can make a difference from observing on site. If a researcher misses something, s/he can go back and reexamine it. Furthermore, from a participant's point of view, s/he can offer a data that makes him comfortable. "The level of participation that an observer takes in the research setting" (Hatch, 2002, p. 73) might be a key issue in doing qualitative observations, in other words, the degree of participation (Spradley, 1979). With this stance, the researcher cannot make any intervention; however, observing it with a DVD still holds possibilities. Spradley explains the ethnographic study of television programs such as soap operas, football games to investigate the cultural themes of the society or to confirm written and unwritten principles of the sport (p. 59). An advantage of using a DVD is that viewing a scene is beneficial to examine the rules or commonalities of a phenomenon of a culture. Therefore in a sense, using DVD may help the

Teacher Beliefs in Cooperative Learning

researcher discover visible and invisible principles in the classroom culture. Another advantage might be that, since observing the site with spatial and time distance, there is no influence of intrusiveness on the research result. In other words, the researcher can keep absolute objectivity.

(b) Disadvantages of using recorded DVD. On the other hand, there are some disadvantages of using recorded DVDs. Since the researcher does not select the timing to shoot the classroom practice, it is important to decide which scenes to select. The more favorable method to scrutinize visual data is a holistic, interpretive lens guided by intuitive inquiry (Saldana, 2013, p.52). With DVDs taken by others, it would be difficult to choose what you wish to see in the frames designated by the researcher. The researcher only has a recording of the interaction at a time chosen by a third party, and only from the direction that someone else decided to point the camera, which might not coincide with the researcher's interests.

Furthermore, in spite of the efforts of viewing some parts many times to clarify some inaudible utterances, they still remained inaudible. Since the researcher is not present at the site, it is not easy to interpret the atmosphere of the research site. In other words, observation with the use of DVD has to be deficient in an "insider perspective" as an advantage of field ethnography.

An additional consideration for observing at school classroom with the use of DVD is that using a DVD, the degree of involvement was non-participatory. As Spradley (1979) suggests in the table of a continuum of involvement, there is no involvement and the type of participation is non-participatory (p. 58). However, in terms of observing in-class activity as a participant researcher, it is noteworthy that Hatch indicates the disadvantages of observing in a classroom setting in which the participants are mostly younger than the adult researcher. Instead he suggests that the researcher can work as a cafeteria worker (p. 75), for example. In such a case, participants can talk to the researcher informally with less social pressure and research at the level of complete involvement in the classroom should be avoided by an adult researcher.

Data Analysis

In this section, three teacher roles that the participant assumed in leading several consecutive lessons of one unit will be presented. It will delve into the teacher beliefs of the participant. The data was analyzed under the paradigm of post-positivism with the perception of natural axioms; where realities are multiple, constructed, and holistic and all entities are in a state of mutual simultaneous shaping, so the interaction between the participant and the interviewer is in constant change, which has a subsequent impact on the results depending on the timing of each interview. Additionally, inquiry should not include value judgement (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 37) with the perspective of grounded theory. Naturalists prefer to have the guiding theory grounded in the data. In this paradigm, seeing is believing. Furthermore, it is assumed that participants should have certain beliefs on teaching. Meaning-making takes place at every moment, as with the view through a kaleidoscope.

The researcher watched the DVD first and conducted the interviews to inquire about the background information or Mr. Q's intention behind his teaching. It was noteworthy that Mr. Q demonstrated three levels in his attitude of teacher- or learner-centeredness, which might

Teacher Beliefs in Cooperative Learning

uncover his beliefs of teacher's role in the language classroom.

(1). The First Scene

Firstly, in the DVD, the class was just about to initiate learning Lesson Seven of the textbook. There were more than thirty male students in the classroom. Mr. Q is introducing a novel of Haruki Murakami by asking questions to students. This scene is 100% teacher-centered, which is overlapping his previous teaching style before he initiated CL approaches.

From my fieldnotes:

Mr. Q told the students to close the textbooks and announces that they would study Lesson Seven. As a pre-reading activity, he shows a picture and asks what the picture shows. A student answers, "A book." Mr. Q asks, "What is the title of the book?" Several students answer simultaneously and Mr. Q echoes, "Ichi Kyuu Hatch Yon (1984 in Japanese)." He continues, "Who is the author?...(pause)...Haruki Murakami." The students all look quite attentive to the screen. He asks if the students have read that book but there is no answer, which means no one has read that book. Mr. Q confirms it and gives the author's name, Haruki Murakami and indicates that the book is the English version of his work. He asks the students to raise hands if they feel like reading the book in Japanese, and most of the class raise their hands.

Mr. Q is talking about his class three years ago, before he initiated CL approaches in class.

From my interview transcript

記憶があいまいなのですが、教員主導でした。...矢印の向きが、教員から生徒への一方通行でした。...それも質問の内容は教科書に書いてある情報や事実を拾うという質問のみだった。生徒同士のインタラクションを行う場面もなかった。...坦々としているので、喜でも怒でもないかな。透明な感じ。すごいニュートラルな。自分の感情はそこにはないかな。自分でやっててあまり感情を感じない。ある意味、自分がプレゼンテーションをしているから、自分が主役という気持ちを抱きやすいのかもしれないけど、全然そんなことはなくてしゃべっている本人は黒子みたいな意識。

(I have only a fuzzy memory, but the previous teaching style was teacher-centered. ...The arrow (of communication) was unidirectional from teacher to students. I asked the questions that let students pick information and facts from the textbooks only. There were not much opportunities of student-to-student interaction. ... Since I didn't have any strong feelings, I was neither happy nor angry. There were none of my emotions. I did not have any particular feelings while teaching. In a sense, when you are giving presentations, you might feel you're the main character, but I don't. I knew I was a behind-the-scene supporter. That's the attitude I have.)

授業者は、授業を進めていることで頭がいっぱいになってしまう。

(I was obsessed with heaps of things to lead the class.)

The discussion was initiated only by Mr. Q and there was interaction between teacher and only a limited number of students. In this scene, his role was a lecturer, managing and

Teacher Beliefs in Cooperative Learning

controlling the classroom.

Back in the days before Mr. Q that implementing CL, he knew that it would be an attractive opportunity for students, but he had never experienced CL as a student. In the interview, he expressed his fear of controlling the class in disorder once students took the initiatives. He did not attend the teachers' meetings or did not see such cases of CL in those days. He did not intend to study any other teaching methods. He also said he had not thought much about what students might feel about his class because the students' main purpose was to study and therefore he did not take the trouble to be considerate of students' feelings. He stated that the goal was to give a lesson without a fuss.

In this video clip, it is noteworthy Mr. Q shows very little emotion on his face; instead, he concentrated on his teaching and gave no compliments to students. As stated above, Mr. Q responded that he did not have any particular feeling at that time, other than something transparent or neutral; his role was a supporter behind the scenes. He is successful in leading a well-ordered class. There was not a sign of distraction and the students maintained their concentration.

(2). The Second Scene

In the middle lesson, Mr. Q implements a series of listening activity for pairs. He now assumes a new role as a facilitator of the activity.

From my fieldnotes:

The students are working in pairs with listening quizzes. They are supposed to listen to a sentence spoken by the CD and fill in the blanks. They are trying to figure out the answers individually first and then they share the answers in pairs. Mr. Q suggests that they should not look at their partners' answers but should reach an answer by themselves. After a while there is a sound of alarm and suddenly most of all the students raise their hands to be called on. Mr. Q calls on one of them, and the student reads out loud the whole sentence including the answer. Mr. Q repeats the answer. For instance, one of the sentence is "Reading in a foreign language is very difficult." ... After a student reads the sentence along with it corresponding answer to the question, he explains what it means (to facilitate understanding).

From the interview transcript:

それまで自分の役割は lecturer で知識を伝達する役割だったんですが、そのあとは facilitator/coordinator なんですよ。生徒たちがアクティビティをうまく進めるために、仕掛けづくりをすることが私の役割です。

(Till then, my role was a lecturer or information provider. Now it is replaced by facilitator or coordinator. My role is to set ideas in places so that students can focus on their activities.)

In this scene, the class is approximately 50% teacher-centered, introducing pair work. His role is a facilitator. He is using the CL tips called Think-Pair-Share (Jacobs, 2002) and Pair-Reward system. There is an increasing amount of interaction between students in pair. There is interaction between Mr. Q and a few students who answer. He also provides some cognitive learning strategies as clues for the purpose of coming up with answers and then

Teacher Beliefs in Cooperative Learning

adds comments to a student's remark to deepen understanding. Students are seated in the arranged order for solo/pair activity based on a CL principle. The pair-reward system heightens students' motivation to get involved in class and to be valuable to the partner. It seems that Mr. Q has a sense of accomplishment as if, to borrow his words, he "went fishing and caught a fish" and expresses that he feels happy about this outcome. It should be noted that the whole class maintains a high degree of concentration and all the students looked equally active and engaged in class.

(3) *The Third Scene*

The third scene is the climax of the last session of the unit. The class is holding an in-class group presentation event. The division of roles had already been done. Since one group consisted of four students, there were four roles in a group.

From my fieldnotes:

Mr. Q is walking around the classroom to see if the students are doing fine. The students in groups of four are taking turns making rehearsals. There are speeches heard from each group here and there. The classroom is packed with quite loud voices but every single student is deeply engaged with his role. Now the rehearsal in the group is done. Next, each presenter comes to different places by the wall and secures "home ground." Each group of audience takes a tour to visit one presenter after another to listen to speeches. Following a presentation, there is a sound of clapping hands.

One presenter stands at the left side of the blackboard. He has posted the visual aid on the wall beside him. Mr. Q asks the audience to give him a big hand before the presenter delivers a speech. During the speech, Mr. Q keeps smiling and afterwards he gives some warm and concrete praises to the presenter. The presenter seems very glad and he even shows off to his classmates by his facial expression.

From the interview transcript:

ポスター・プレゼンで生徒が生き生きと仲間内で盛り上がっている姿や手の込んだポスターを見ると、「ああ、彼らもそれなりの時間と情熱をかけて取り組んだ」と思って、「彼らも満足して楽しんで取り組んだんだなあ」とうかがい知るとい感じです。(When I look at the students excited about working in groups actively or their meticulously drawn posters, I can tell from their attitudes, "Oh, they spent so much time and passion completing this task." I can guess that they have had a good time, and were satisfied in engaging in this activity.)

Mr. Q's role in Scene 3 is that of a facilitator to make sure everything is going all right, that the audience is enjoying the presentation, and he also made sure to praise them. Each group consisted of four students. In CL, four is said to be a magic number because it is easy to discuss with close distance and also to make pairs in two ways. Each member has a responsibility to assume to promote equal participation (Jacobs, et al., 2002) and a feeling of involvement. One of the member roles was so called *GM*, general manager, functioning as a leader in the group. Another is the presenter. Two others are questioners when they visit other groups' presentations. The roles change at each rotation. Furthermore he adopts the CL tip

Teacher Beliefs in Cooperative Learning

titled, *World Cafe* presentation style, which is typically used in poster presentations. Although there are multiple presentations going on simultaneously, and the class was very loud, the students were keenly interested in their classmates' presentations. They sustained a high degree of involvement here again.

After the presentation there was a Q&A session, during which Mr. Q was always smiling and he and the students often broke up laughing. He provided compliments for the individual presenters with very supportive praises. Receiving the compliments, the presenters looked very glad. It was evident that there was a good rapport between the teacher and the students. In the previous scenes, Mr. Q looked reserved and did not make very many compliments. It was the first time for him to openly praise students throughout the video clips.

Lastly the other qualitative results that emerged from the interview will be presented: Mr. Q's sense of worth and his teacher development. Now he is talking about student evaluation of his class and how he perceived it before he implemented CL.

From the interview transcript:

学年末の最後に「先生の授業は良かったよ」なんて生徒から言われることは勿論ない。...なので、生徒が私の授業に満足していることを強く感じたことはないですよ。むしろうまくいかないことのほうが多いから、「ああ、生徒のニーズに合っていなかったな」「うまくいってなかったな」というほうに意識が9割くらい、1対9の割合で行っていましたね。(At the end of the semester no students commented, "Your class was great." ... So I did not feel that the students were satisfied with my class. Rather, I had so many unsuccessful experiences, so I reflected, "Oh, today's class did not meet the student needs," or "The class did not work today." Those thoughts were on my mind in a proportion of nine out of ten.)

Here, according to his comment, the result of his teaching is colored in two ways. Although student feedback might possibly have been positive, his major concern was based on his self-reflection which is negative. Maybe Mr. Q did not wish to receive positive feedback from the students and did not have the necessity for it. He mainly focused on self-reflection, which is negative and self-reproachful because he sincerely wished for his further development.

Next Mr. Q's teacher development will be cited. He mentions how he came up with the ideas for class in the interview.

From my interview:

(授業準備は)楽しいとまでは言わないかな。teaching technique/skill はまず自分で思いつかないので、新英研などに行ってネタ集めするんだけど、ネタを仕入れるのは楽しいと思う。自分が思いつかなかったアイデアをもらうのは目からうろこ。...合いそうなものを選んでやってみる。(I'm not saying that preparation for class is a lot of fun. Because I don't come up with ideas for teaching techniques, I collect them at teachers' meetings like Shin Ei Ken. It is fun because it is an eye-opening experience to receive a novel idea. I can select and practice some tips that may be appropriate for my class.)

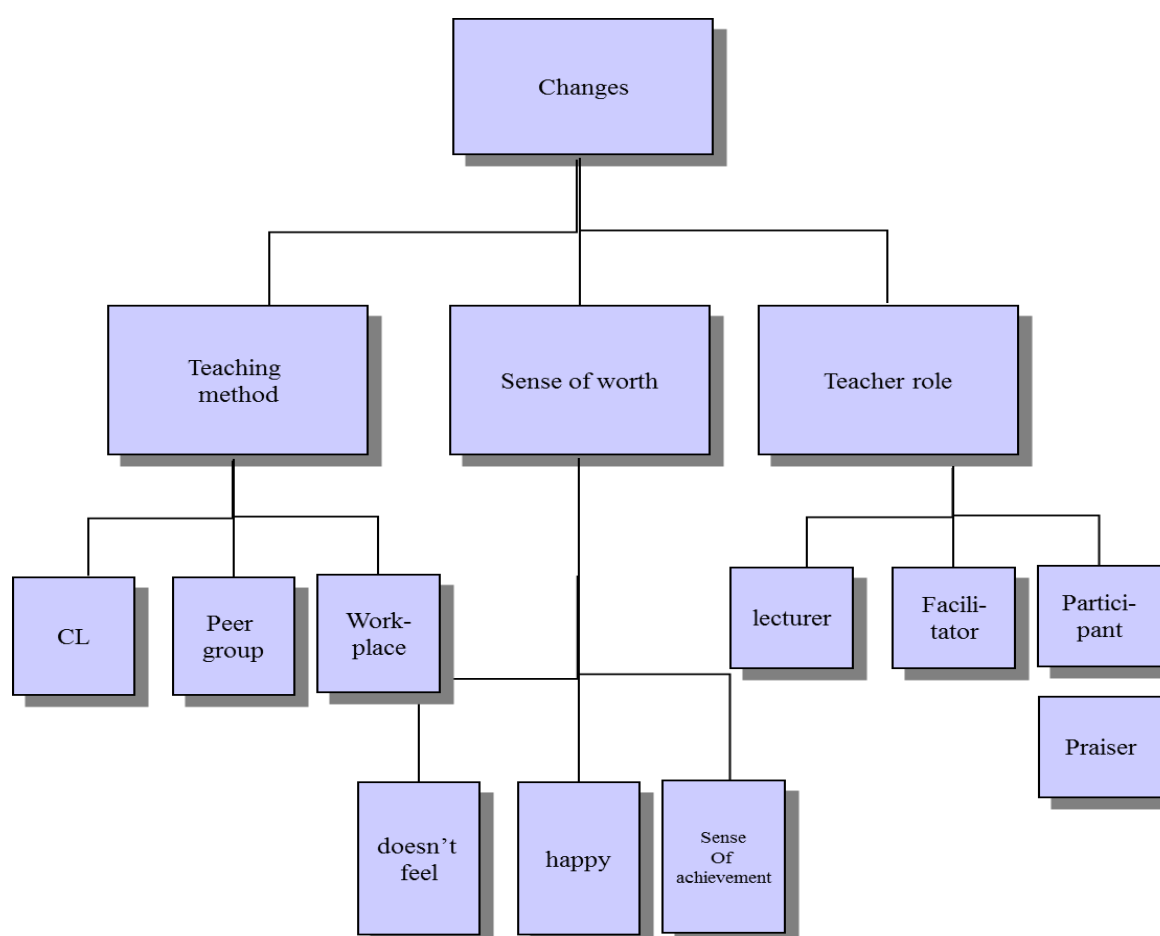
Therefore his resource of inspiration is teachers' peer groups. From the first interview, he commented repeatedly that teachers' peer group is 99% of the source of his inspiration and

Teacher Beliefs in Cooperative Learning

motivation. He got ideas such as the pair-reward system and World Café style from a presentation and a workshop given by high school teachers at teacher seminars. Whether formal or informal, he notices that learning from other teachers beyond his work is precious resource. He also delights in talking over the matter eating and drinking with peers and being impressed by his peers' remarks at an informal setting. He values keen and practical ideas whose effectiveness is proven by someone familiar in a similar context. On the other hand, in terms of his colleagues at his work place, subsequent textbook selection is all they share. Because the colleagues are busy, they do not have opportunities to discuss teaching matters together except for textbooks. Therefore the source of his incentive and inspiration has to be teachers' peer group.

To sum up, In terms of his teacher beliefs and teacher roles, there were three changes confirmed in the interviews: the changes in Mr. Q's teaching method, in his roles in the classroom, and his feeling about sense of worth. Figure 1. below represents diagrammatically the structure of each component.

Figure 1. Components analyzed



Discussion

The previous section examined the results of observations and interviews with the participant practicing CL in the English-teaching classroom. This section will summarize the changes to his teaching practices, and clarify the data that the discussion is based on, associated changes, and connect the themes to the literature previously reviewed.

From the first scene, where Mr. Q provided a teacher-centered Q&A session, the researcher observed how he conducted his teacher-centered lesson before he adopts CL approaches to his class. Implementing CL-based lessons in an English classroom was a challenge for Mr. Q because he himself had not had the experience of learning language with in a CL classroom. One influential factor that determines the teaching style is likely the way they were taught as English learners (Nishimuro and Borg, 2013, p. 43). Until three years ago, he used to teach in the style he was familiar with, but he experimented new pedagogic approaches. One of his main concerns in implementing CL was class control; generally teachers are reluctant to practice CL because controlling the class instruction is challenging and the changes that CL imposed on the existing classroom practices are significant (Gillies, 2008, p. 242). Therefore due to the lack of experience of CL as a learner and any unpredictable risk in the classroom culture, he was reluctant to implement CL. In terms of his affective attributes, he confesses that he did not have any particular feeling but just assumed responsibility, which might be reflected by his facial expression.

In the second scene, his role switched to that of facilitator, as he admits. He devised and employed some CL techniques in his classrooms such as Think-pair-class (Jacobs, 2002) and Pair-reward system, resulting in enthusiastic student engagement in class-wide discussion. It seems that students became accustomed to the new classroom culture of CL. There is a gradual change observed in his comments that he as a subject instead of a supporter behind the scene had a feeling of self-actualization. His sense of achievement seems to coincide with the salient student engagement seen in all the students' raising their hands. It was a moment when his active involvement in teachers' peer group and seminars and his thought-out lesson plans are proven effective. His passion for lesson development was part of his intrinsic motivation to make his work successful. On his face, there was not a salient but a reserved smile confirmed.

In the third scene, Mr. Q's role was a facilitator as well as a participant, and he did not forget to praise his students with his constant smiles. Quite opposite to his previous remark on what he had been doing before initiating CL approaches, he intuitively from their attitudes and solid favorable responses from students, something he was unconcerned about before CL was implemented. To create a festive atmosphere was critical so that everyone could enjoy the presentation event. It appears that he changed his focus because of the goal of the lesson on that day.

Mercer (2012) defines identity as an individual sense of self in relation to a particular social context or community of practice. Teacher-centeredness before CL practices is now turned into participant identity in the presentation creating connection with students and provides students with a sense of approachability. Morita (2012) argues that identity is constructed and negotiated in a certain discourse community and individuals' sense of who they are in relation to the particular social context or community of practice in which they participate. Mr. Q chooses to participate in the presentation event in order to make the CL presentation event successful. Although it was clear in the interview that he is not sure of

Teacher Beliefs in Cooperative Learning

what identity he may take on, he picks new roles as a CL facilitator according to his teacher beliefs inspired at teachers' peer meetings.

It is also noteworthy that he discovers inspiration for teacher development away from his workplace rather than solely from his colleagues. In the interview, Mr. Q commented on collegial relationship in the faculty room; he said that they look so busy because they prioritize preparation for the lesson over communication. As Nishino (2011) suggests, secondary school teachers are overloaded and do not have opportunities for teacher development. That is the case in high schools as well. Therefore the workplace is not a space for teacher development and it is up to individuals whether they pursue further teacher development to make their class more fruitful. As Mr. Q emphasized in the end of the interview, he deems that experience at teachers' peer groups is valuable. He shares and discusses daily practice with his peers. As Nishimuro and Borg (2013) state, experience influences teachers' choice for lesson content, but if the experience is not exposed to his/her own critical reflection informed by propositional knowledge, it may not lead to sound pedagogical production (p. 45). In this way, Mr. Q exposed his teaching practices not only to his own self-reflection but also to constructive criticism of his peers, through which he has developed his teaching skills with CL approaches. Although admitting the value of theoretical resources of language teaching, he does not take advantage of them. Instead his resource is mainly information he collects from his peers at teachers' seminars. Reflecting experience in the light of other teachers' practice handed down by generations within reliable collegiality (not meaning collegiality at an identical workplace) might go beyond the theoretical limitation, but it might be possible to devise more practical and flexible pedagogies. The teachers' peer group serves as a space where teachers try to improve themselves by learning from others.

For further research, the limitations for this study are related to the following six points. First, teacher beliefs in CL is a comparatively new area of study so there was not so much literature in this area. Second, there is a lack of a common understanding of CL among Japanese practitioners; it has been used by many teachers of English and presently it is an umbrella term including similar aspects to CL. Furthermore, it is more complicated when translated into Japanese because CL and collaborative learning are mixed together into one translated Chinese characters, *kyodo gakushu*. Third, this research involved only one participant, but in case there may be more participants, the transferability of the result may increase. Fourth, in the interview, the participant was intelligent, eloquent and was skilled at presenting logical thoughts so his thoughts were very accessible. At the same time, however, when the researcher asked about his feelings, it was a different matter, so the researcher had to question him from a variety of different angles. This might depend on the participants' contexts as Jacob (1999) suggests that teachers are affected by numerous influences including their gender, or cultures. Fifth, the interview process might have been influenced by our *sempai-kohai* relationship. The researcher consistently employed honorific language to conduct the interview, resulting in a formal atmosphere. Finally in the beginning of the research, there was an assumption that his adaptation of CL approaches would be a response to the MEXT pressure for English teachers to provide lessons for communicative purposes on high schools, and typically private schools are affected by the public educational policy. However, that proved not to be a factor in this study because his workplace was a private high school and it does not have such organizational culture as to follow the public trends.

Conclusion

This study endeavored to capture changes in the teacher beliefs of an experienced English teacher of high school before and after he initiated CL approaches in his classroom based on the research question; how has the implementation of a CL approach influenced the teacher beliefs and cognition? In spite of his initial concerns, the untried teaching method was successful to develop learner participation and provided him with the impetus for change in his teaching. His role as a teacher went through a process of transition from lecturer, through facilitator and participant to praiser. There were some significant changes in his mindset as well as his relationship with his students. As he employed the techniques for CL, he reduced his distance with the students and realized the joy of teaching and at the same time his students became more motivated to work on the class activities. The changes in these teacher roles and teacher beliefs are interlinked closely. Finally there was an increase in understanding of the relationship between the teachers' peer group and teacher development.

Further research of teacher beliefs and development might be a perplexing issue in terms of how theory should endorse practice for working teachers, and vice versa. Teachers are always in search of new ideas, whether they be CL or else. What is important is that those ideas have to be ready-made and empirically effect-proven by other practitioners since they don't have time and opportunities with colleagues at work. There is still the need for well-balanced research that bridges theory and practice for language teachers who might consider implementing CL in the classroom.

References

- Borg, S. (2001). Teachers' beliefs. *ELT Journal*, 55(2), 186.
- Borg, S. (2003). Teacher cognition in language teaching: A review of research on what language teachers think, know, believe, and do. *Language Teaching*, 36(2), 81-109.
- Borg, S. (2006). *Teacher cognition and language education: Research and practice*. London: Continuum.
- Borg, S. (2011). The impact of in-service teacher education on language teachers' beliefs. *System*, 39(3), 370-380.
doi:<http://dx.doi.org.libproxy.temple.edu/10.1016/j.system.2011.07.009>
- Emerson, R. M., Fretz, R. I., & Shaw, L. L. (1995). *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago.
- Fushino, K. (2014). Kyodogakushu to kyoshi no shinjo [Cooperative learning and teacher cognition]. In Sasajima, S., Nagamine, T., Nishino, & T., Ehara, Y. (Eds.), *Trends in language teacher cognition* (pp. 164-172). Tokyo: Kaitakusha.
- Hatch, J. A. (2002). *Doing qualitative research in education settings*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Jacob, E. (1999). *Cooperative learning in context: An educational innovation in everyday classrooms*. Albany, N.Y: State University of New York Press.
- Jacobs, G. M., Power, M. A., & Inn, L. W. (2002). *The teacher's sourcebook for cooperative learning: Practical techniques, basic principles, and frequently asked questions*. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press. (日本語版) 伏野久美子・木村春美訳 (2005) 『先生のためのアイディアブック：協同学習の基本原則とテクニック』日本協同教育学会)

Teacher Beliefs in Cooperative Learning

- Koyalan, A. (2014). Towards more cooperative classrooms. *Journal of Language and Literature Education*, 9, 29-3.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publications.
- Mercer, S. (2012). Self-concept; situating self. In Mercer, S., Ryan, S., and Williams, M. (Eds.). *Psychology for language learning: Insights from research, theory and practice*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Morita, N. (2011). Identity: the situated constitutions of identity and positionality in situated classrooms. In Mercer, S., Ryan, S., Williams, M. (Eds.). *Psychology for language learning: Insights from research, theory and practice*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Nishimuro, M., & Borg, S. (2013). Teacher cognition and grammar teaching in a Japanese high school. *JALT Journal*, 35(1), 29-50.
- Nishino, T. (2011). Japanese high school teachers' beliefs and practices regarding communicative language teaching. *JALT Journal*, 33(2), 131-156.
- Pajares, M. F. (1992). Teachers' beliefs and educational research: Cleaning up a messy construct. *Review of Educational Research* 62(3), 307-332. doi:10.2307/1170741
- Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2001). *Approaches and methods in language teaching*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Saldaña, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Spradley, J. P. (1979). *The ethnographic interview*. Fort Worth, Texas: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.